



Heidi Bridenhagen Winemaker - MacRostie Winery and Vineyards



Heidi Bridenhagen - Thale's Vineyard, Block A2

Like Founder Steve MacRostie, Heidi Bridenhagen brings inquisitiveness and an absolute attention to the details that are essential for great winemaking to her role at MacRostie Winery and Vineyards. A dynamic and gifted young talent, Heidi was named MacRostie's winemaker before the age of 30, and is just the third winemaker in the winery's storied three-decade history. A believer in the value of exploration and experimentation, Heidi has worked closely with Steve to establish one of the Sonoma Coast's most diverse and acclaimed vineyard programs, featuring more than 30 Chardonnay sites and over 15 Pinot Noir vineyards. To preserve this remarkable diversity and achieve a layered complexity in her wines, Heidi does as many as 130 small fermentations each vintage. While this is an incredible amount of work, when it comes time for blending, it gives Heidi an amazing palette of flavors from which to craft MacRostie's Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs.

Heidi earned a degree in biochemistry from the University of Colorado at Boulder. After university, Heidi spent half a year traveling through Europe. As she explored local wines in France, Italy, Spain and Germany, Heidi became fascinated by the ways in which wine expressed itself in different regions. Returning to the United States, Heidi was eager to use her scientific skills, but she also wanted a career that engaged her creative side. She found what she was looking for in the enology laboratory of Jackson Family Wines. During her time at Jackson Family Wines, and later at Clos du Bois, Heidi built on her science background to establish a strong understanding of winemaking. She also found that she loved the camaraderie and collaborative spirit of a winery, being in the vineyards, and the constant focus on refinement through trial and experimentation.

Eager to gain a more international understanding of winemaking, Heidi travelled to New Zealand and spent half a year working in the cellar at Oyster Bay, where she was involved with the winery's reserve and vineyard-designate programs. Following Oyster Bay, Heidi joined the team at Sonoma-Cutrer, where she honed her craft and palate working alongside noted winemakers Mick Schroeter and Cara Morrison.

In 2011, Heidi joined MacRostie as assistant winemaker. At MacRostie, Heidi found a winemaking home that embraced her desire to innovate and work in ever-smaller lots. In Steve MacRostie, she also found an engaging mentor who taught her about winegrowing and shared his decades of winemaking experience. Heidi thrived in this empowering environment, and was soon reimagining MacRostie's Pinot Noir program, bringing in 50 small fermentation bins, so she could keep even more lots separate. Heidi and Steve also began running numerous small-lot trials in areas that included: extraction levels, the use of whole clusters, tannin management, cold soak durations and temperatures, yeast selection, barrel versus tank fermentation (Chardonnay), use of pump over versus punch down protocols (Pinot Noir), and more.

In recognition of her winemaking talents and her numerous contributions, Heidi was named the winemaker for MacRostie in 2013. Today, Heidi is as active in the vineyards as she is in the winery, traveling to all of MacRostie's vineyard partners regularly, where she works carefully with the growers to tailor farming techniques, including pruning, fruit drops, harvest decisions, etc., for each block. In the winery, Heidi and Steve are constantly trying to refine their techniques as winemakers. By challenging and inspiring each other, Heidi and Steve are making the best wines in MacRostie's history.

"Heidi has great vision as a winemaker and a wonderful palate," says Steve. "I love working with her, and I love what she has brought to our wines." In addition to her role at MacRostie, Heidi is active on the Sonoma County Vintners Trade Education Committee, where she serves alongside other noted growers and winemakers to help educate and advocate on behalf of Sonoma County.